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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2028
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: COLORADO CASTIGLIONI: "I WAS ROBBED"

Classified By: DCM Michael J. Fitzpatrick; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Former Colorado presidential candidate and dissident Luis Castiglioni personally confirmed to Ambassador February 25 reports that President Duarte and "oficialista" candidate Blanca Ovelar stole the Colorado primary. Castiglioni said it became clear that Ovelar's faction was stealing the election when President Duarte used fake exit polls to announce late December 16 that Ovelar had won that day's Colorado primary election by 15 percent. Later that evening, when the real voting results came back showing a likely Castiglioni win, Blanca Ovelar cried and President Duarte fainted. According to Castiglioni, Colorado Senator (and Paraguayan mafia ringleader) Galaverna "saved the day" by stepping in to orchestrate fraud, stopping the vote count (for several weeks) and substituting a number of fraudulent electoral acts, thus making Ovelar "his baby." Castiglioni confirmed that Ovelar's faction stole 35,000 to 50,000 votes in order to declare victory. (NOTE: The final results published January 21 declared Ovelar won 366,722 votes to Castiglioni's 362,702 votes. END NOTE.)

¶2. (C) Regarding the April 20 national election, Castiglioni said he is neither speaking to nor negotiating with Duarte or Ovelar. He said his Vanguard faction of the Colorado Party will not support Ovelar, but his candidates remain in their respective races for governor and Congress. He asserted that he will maintain his faction's unity, and that they will not "sell out" to Duarte. Castiglioni told the Ambassador he believes his supporters will split their votes evenly between opposition presidential candidates Lino Oviedo, Fernando Lugo and Pedro Fadul. Castiglioni was reluctant to predict who would win the election, hedging his bets by narrowing the field to Lugo or Oviedo. (NOTE: Castiglioni noted that Lugo is not impressive, calling him an "airhead." END NOTE). Castiglioni reported that he is talking to all three opposition candidates, and stressed that the next president will have to govern by coalition. He predicted his faction would have as many senators as the "oficialistas" faction will have supporting Ovelar.

¶3. (C) Castiglioni asserted that Ovelar's popularity is sagging and that she doesn't have a chance of winning the election if she continues to associate herself so closely with Duarte. He acknowledged Duarte's and Galaverna's "business" connections in passing, suggesting that Galaverna probably has "stuff" on Duarte which ensures Galaverna's continued influence. Castiglioni wasn't sure why Ovelar is sticking it out with Duarte. "She may think she can govern independently if she's elected," he said, "but she can't."

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Despite losing the Colorado presidential nomination, Castiglioni was characteristically optimistic about his political situation. While disappointed that his party squandered its opportunity for change from within, he feels his "principled opposition" to Duarte has strengthened his support base. Castiglioni is probably right about how

his supporters' votes will be distributed. But his prediction about Paraguay's next president, and specifically his failure to consider a possible Ovelar win, may be based more on wishful thinking than reality. (NOTE: The latest poll, released February 26, shows Lugo with 31, Ovelar with 25, Oviedo with 23, and Fadul with 7 percent. The more people who turn out to vote, the harder the presidential election will be to steal, and the more likely the Colorados' 61-year governing streak will end. END NOTE). In the immediate term, Castiglionи will vacation in the United States. Then, he will focus on forming a coalition of "good guys" in Congress to achieve political reform. While it's too early to say whether he will be successful in working across party lines, it's a sure bet that, at age 45, he will be a political player in the next term, and that he'll make another run for the presidency in 2013. END COMMENT.

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